

Findings of the Kentucky Scholastic Audit/Review Survey

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Submitted by



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Executive Summary

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is required to conduct scholastic audits of schools that do not meet achievement goals. The scholastic audit process, which is based on the *Standards and Indicators for School Improvement: Kentucky's Model for Whole School Improvement (SI-SI)*, is a measure of a school's improvement toward meeting those goals. The KDE contracted with AEL to develop and administer a survey to determine the degree to which the scholastic audit process conducted in schools during 2000-2001 has improved educational practices. Specifically, the survey was developed to measure school-level educators' perceptions of audit and review team visits, subsequent reports and recommendations, and impact each had on the school. The survey contains 45 rating scale items in eight clusters, eight open-ended questions, and five binary questions. The survey was administered in the spring of 2002 in all 131 audited and reviewed schools to building administrators, teachers, Site-Based Decision Making (SBDM) council members, Highly Skilled Educators (HSE), and Regional Service Center (RSC) respondents. The 778 usable surveys from 85 schools were received. This report provides KDE information regarding: (1) how the audits and reviews were received (e.g., whether they were considered fair and accurate), (2) suggestions for improvement, (3) issues and problems that arose, and (4) differences in perceptions among the participants who facilitated or played direct roles in the audits and reviews. The following summary reports survey findings and is arranged chronologically and by three variables (school level, audit status, and role group).

According to the survey, respondents held high expectations of the scholastic audit process and most had accessed and used the SI-SI before a visit had been conducted. Respondents suggested the following improvements prior to visits:

- Shorten the SI-SI, write it in a clear, user-friendly manner, and provide training in its use.
- Provide schools a clear purpose of the visit, advanced organizers, a schedule of events, and more time between notice that a visit was to take place and the beginning of the visit.

To improve the accuracy and appropriateness of the visit, respondents suggested KDE:

- Ensure that teams select the most appropriate methods, sample of participants, and duration of visit.
- Ensure audit or review teams are familiar with district policies and data collection methods.
- Encourage teams to provide feedback.
- Ensure teams are friendlier during the visit.

Apparently, most respondents were familiar with the recommendations to schools. Approximately one-third indicated their school had received objections about the recommendations and just under half reported that their school devised alternative strategies. Respondents' suggestions for improving follow-up included:

- Monitoring districts and schools for progress.
- Seeking faculty and administrator input.
- Holding meetings to discuss team findings from school visits.

- Providing more ongoing professional development on using state standards and instructional strategies.

Using school as the level of analysis, several response patterns were noted including:

- Elementary School respondents reported:
 - High levels of agreement that recommendations in the report were accurate.
 - The lowest proportion of objections to recommendations.
 - The most preparedness for explaining recommendations to others.
 - The greatest percentage indicated that the audit process had a positive impact.
 - The process prompted policy review, revision, and implementation.
 - The highest percentage of increased SI-SI use after the audit process.
- Middle School respondents reported:
 - High levels of agreement that recommendations in the report were accurate.
 - Improvements in the school climate and that schools conducted formative self-evaluation.
- High School respondents reported:
 - Low levels of agreement that recommendations in the report were accurate.
 - The greatest percentage of objections to recommendations.
 - That the process prompted policy review, revision, and implementation.

When audit status of the school is employed as the level of analysis, respondents at audited schools reported:

- A higher percentage who had read the recommendations.
- A better understanding of the recommendations.
- A higher opinion about the usefulness and applicability of recommendations.
- A sense of positive impact of the audit process.

Role Group differences in patterns of response were also detected. It appears that building administrators were considered most instrumental in the planning and follow-up of the scholastic audit process. Other findings include:

- Administrators, HSE and RSC personnel reported positive opinions compared to the opinions of other role groups about the usefulness and application of recommendations, perceived greater use of SI-SI, and reported faith in the methods used for data collection.
- SBDM teachers and teachers who were not on the council reported less positive opinions about the usefulness and application of recommendations, perceived not as great use of SI-SI, and reported lower faith in the methods used for data collection when compared with other role groups.
- The KDE may want to consider respondents' reports and suggestions for improving the scholastic audit process. AEL recommends that the KDE pilot and carefully evaluate the impact of any changes before moving to full implementation.

Findings of the Kentucky Scholastic Audit/Review Survey

Introduction

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is required to conduct scholastic audits of schools that do not meet their achievement goals for each two-year period. The scholastic audit process is based on the *Standards and Indicators for School Improvement: Kentucky's Model for Whole School Improvement* (SI-SI) as the measure of a school's preparedness for improvement. There are two levels to the scholastic audit — audit and review. Audits are used to “determine the appropriateness of a school's classification and to recommend needed assistance.” This includes reviewing the school's learning environment, efficiency, and academic performance of students; evaluating certified staff members; and making a recommendation to the KDE about the appropriateness of a school's classification and recommendations for improving teaching and learning at the school. Schools failing to improve undergo a review by a scholastic audit team. Reviews do not include a formal evaluation of certified staff members. In addition, all schools must revise a School Improvement Plan to become eligible to receive state school improvement funds.

The KDE contracted with AEL to develop and administer a survey to determine whether the scholastic audits and reviews conducted in schools during 2000-2001 have made a difference in school or district practices. This report provides KDE information regarding: (1) how the audits and reviews were received (e.g., whether they were considered fair and accurate), (2) suggestions for improvement, (3) issues and problems that arose, and (4) differences in perceptions among the various participants who facilitated or played direct roles in the audits and reviews.

The Kentucky Scholastic Audit/Review Survey (KSA/R) was conducted by a three-member team from AEL, a private, nonprofit corporation headquartered in Charleston, West Virginia. Since 1966, AEL has worked to improve education and educational opportunity through research, development, and services to national, state, and local school systems and education agencies. AEL has extensive experience in needs assessment and evaluation and deep knowledge of current research and best practices. The survey team was headed by Dr. James Craig, Director of Research. He was assisted by Keith Sturges, Research Associate, and Rebecca Fletcher, Secretary.

Description of the Survey

The KSA/R Survey was developed by AEL to measure Kentucky school-level educators' perceptions of audit and review team visits, subsequent reports and recommendations, and the perceived impact each had on the school. The KSA/R Survey contains 45 rating scale items in eight clusters composed of varying numbers of items. Items are rated on a 5- or 6-point scale (depending on the logic of the individual item) from “Strongly Agree” (1) to “Strongly Disagree” (5) or “Don't Know” (6). In addition,

eight open-ended questions and five binary questions further explore issues related to the scholastic audit/review process. Open-ended and binary items were analyzed conjointly with clusters. This analysis report presents results for item clusters, individual multiple-choice items, and open-ended items.

The survey was administered in the spring of 2002 in all 131 audited and reviewed schools to building administrators, teachers, Site-Based Decision Making (SBDM) council members, Highly Skilled Educators (HSE), and Regional Service Center (RSC) respondents. Because HSE and RSC respondents shared no statistically significant differences, the two groups were combined for purposes of the analysis. AEL received 778 usable KSA/R surveys from 85 schools. How representative the respondents are of educators in the schools that were audited or reviewed is not known. Surveys returned without the participant role identified were omitted from analysis. Table 1 contains a summary of survey respondents' roles.

Table 1. Number and Percentage of Respondents by Role

| Role | Number | Percentage |
|-------------------|--------|------------|
| Non-SBDM teachers | 382 | .49 |
| SBDM teachers | 179 | .23 |
| Administrators | 104 | .13 |
| SBDM parents | 61 | .08 |
| RSCs/HSEs | 52 | .07 |

In addition, as a measure of comparison for use of the SI-SI and sense of efficacy resulting from KDE's efforts (e.g., audit, review), a second survey was constructed by AEL to measure non-audit or review educators' perceptions of the impact SI-SI had on school processes. The questionnaire contains 16 rating scale items in two clusters. Items are rated on a 5- or 6-point scale (depending on the logic of the individual item) from "Strongly Agree" (1) to "Strongly Disagree" (5) or "Don't Know" (6). In addition, three open-ended questions further explore issues related to the SI-SI.

The survey was administered in the spring of 2002 in 100 randomly selected schools that had not been audited or reviewed in 2001. AEL received 434 usable SI-SI Surveys from 61 schools. How representative the respondents are of educators in these schools is not known. Because non-SBDM teachers and SBDM teachers showed no statistically significant differences in response, the two groups were combined for purposes of the analysis. Surveys returned without the participant role identified were omitted from analysis. Table 2 contains a summary of survey respondents' roles.

Table 2. Number and Percentage of Respondents by Role

| Role | Number | Percentage |
|----------------|--------|------------|
| Teachers | 283 | .65 |
| Administrators | 78 | .18 |
| SBDM parents | 57 | .13 |
| RSCs/HSEs | 16 | .04 |

Item Clusters and Content

Items on the KSA/R Survey were clustered via factor analysis¹ into eight sets. Two clusters, SI-SI Before and Efficacy, were also used for corresponding items on the SI-SI Survey. The number of items by cluster appears in Table 3. The third column contains the minimum number of items required for the inclusion of a respondent's questionnaire for each cluster. For example, if a respondent provided responses for two items in the Expectations cluster and left the other two blank, that survey was omitted from analyses. The fourth column contains the number of respondents who did not meet the criterion of the third column and were therefore omitted from the analysis. Brief definitions of the clusters used in this report follow Table 3. A list of individual items within each cluster is included in Appendix A.

Table 3. Items by Cluster

| Cluster Label | Number of Items | Minimum Items | Omitted from Analysis |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Expectations | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Accuracy of Methods | 3 | 3 | 21 |
| Accuracy of Recommendations | 2 | 2 | 14 |
| Implementation of Recommendations | 4 | 3 | 13 |
| District Involvement | 2 | 2 | 16 |
| Professional Development | 2 | 2 | 11 |
| SI-SI Before * | 4 | 3 | 9/2* |
| Efficacy * | 9 | 6 | 5/4* |

* Clusters drawn from both the KSA/R Survey and the SI-SI Survey.

Expectations. This cluster focuses on stakeholders' reactions to the notice about the scholastic audit or review visit. The item cluster includes the degree to which respondents believed the process would benefit the school, received clear information about what would happen during the visit, and felt prepared for the visit.

Accuracy of methods. The Accuracy of Methods cluster relates to respondents' level of agreement that methods used to collect data were accurate and appropriate. Specific items cover the degree to which data collection methods were accurate, the audit or review was fair, and the visit provided valuable input for stakeholders.

¹ Factor loadings were not used to produce clusters, but to identify items that group together.

Accuracy of recommendations. This cluster relates to respondents' level of agreement that recommendations provided in the report were accurate and appropriate. Specific items cover the degree to which stakeholders believed findings to be accurate, recommendations to be well founded, and suggestions for improvement to be clear.

Implementation of recommendations. This cluster focuses on the schools' reactions to scholastic audit or review recommendations. Specifically, the cluster includes items that assess input from key players, plans for implementing recommendations, the degree to which stakeholders are familiar with the plans, and monitoring and outcomes of implementation.

District involvement. The District Involvement cluster ascertains how much the audit or review affected district personnel involvement in school matters. The cluster includes items addressing district involvement in implementing recommendations and district leadership.

Professional development. The Professional Development cluster reflects how the audit or review affected professional development opportunities. The cluster includes two professional development items that address respondents' recommendations from the audit or review and the adequacy of the professional development to meet school needs for improvement.

SI-SI Before. The SI-SI Before cluster reflects stakeholders' reported use of the SI-SI before the intervention. The cluster includes four items addressing review of the SI-SI, perceived school use of the SI-SI, and opinions about the usefulness of SI-SI. This cluster was used on the SI-SI Survey as well.

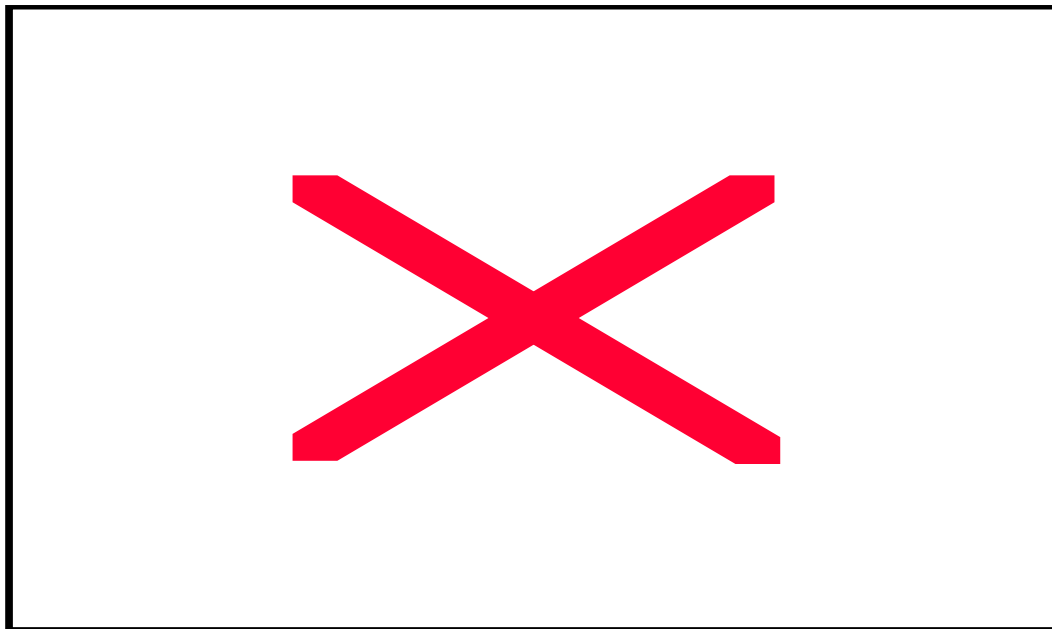
Efficacy. The Efficacy cluster relates the degree to which the audit or review positively impacted school processes. The cluster includes items addressing increased familiarity with standards and indicators, use of test data and student work to improve instructional delivery, curriculum alignment, allocation of resources, communication and collaboration among teachers, and student performance. This cluster was used on the SI-SI survey as well.

Preliminary Findings

Major Players

On the KSA/R Survey, respondents were asked to select role groups that "played a major role in helping the school/district plan and follow-up with the scholastic audit/review recommendations." Figure 1 below shows the percentages of people in each role group at each school level that played a major role in planning and following up with recommendations. According to respondents, school administrators, regardless of school level, were most instrumental, followed closely by non-SBDM teachers, particularly at the elementary school level. It appears that district administrators and SBDM parents played a less critical role. Regional service center personnel, especially at the high and middle school levels, appear to have played a minor role in helping the school/district plan and follow-up with the scholastic audit or review recommendations.

Figure 1. Percentages of persons within role groups, by school level, that were reported as playing a major role in planning and following up scholastic audit/review recommendations.



Before the Audit/Review

Improving Preparation for Future Scholastic Audits/Reviews

Five major categories emerged from responses to the open-ended item, “Describe ways to improve preparation for future scholastic audit/review visits to schools.” The categories are ranked in order of frequency based on 287 responses.

Be more specific ($n=63$, 22%). Respondents suggested that the audit team be more specific about expectations and the purpose of the audit or review, provide specific instructions, list who and what will be involved, and specify the types of data collection that will be used. Many respondents said the information they received was vague, so they were not sure what to expect or what to prepare.

Help with school level preparation ($n=48$, 17%). Respondents suggested providing schools with ways to prepare for visits. Many suggested ensuring that teachers have access to and understand the Standards and Indicators. Respondents also suggested that KDE encourage schools to maintain accurate and complete fiscal, accountability, and student records so that the school will be prepared for the audit visit. Non-SBDM teachers recommended department meetings be held to ensure all personnel are informed about the audit or review process. In addition, several suggested formal training for all faculty and staff to prepare for future audits.

Conduct pre-audit visit ($n=44$, 15%). Respondents representing each role group said that a pre-audit visit by the audit or review team to introduce themselves would be helpful to ease the fear and tension of the process and to give school personnel

a better understanding of the process. In addition, respondents from various roles suggested that the audit or review personnel should be friendlier toward school staff.

Schedule carefully ($n=36$, 12%). Various respondents suggested that the audit or review team should make a schedule and adhere to it as closely as possible. It was mentioned that visits were changed at the last minute and took away from instructional time. Several respondents said that teachers used personal time to read and analyze the material for the audit and should have received paid leave time. It was suggested that audits and reviews be scheduled carefully so as not to interfere with testing or holidays.

Provide more time ($n=32$, 11%). Respondents suggested that more time be given to schools to prepare for the audit. Several respondents specifically stated that they were given one week or less to prepare for the audit and felt that this was not sufficient.

Cluster 1: Expectations

The Expectations cluster reports on stakeholders' reactions to receiving notice that they were going to be audited or reviewed. The mean score of 2.25 ($SD = .77$) for the Expectations cluster indicates that respondents had moderately high expectations about the prospective impact of the audit or review on the school. Additional analyses revealed no statistically significant differences among role groups, school levels, or audit status regarding the Expectations cluster.

During the Audit or Review Visit

Cluster 2: SI-SI Before

The SI-SI Before cluster addresses stakeholders' reported use of the SI-SI before the intervention. This analysis included data from both the KSA/R Survey and the SI-SI Survey. No statistically significant differences were found as a function of role, school level, or audit status. The mean score and standard deviations for respondents of each audit status was as follows:

- Audit schools: 2.2 ($SD = .55$)
- Review schools: 2.14 ($SD = .48$)
- SI-SI only schools: 1.98 ($SD = .56$)

In other words, respondents agreed that they were familiar with and had used SI-SI in their schools.

Cluster 3: Accuracy and Appropriateness of Methods

The Accuracy of Methods cluster reports respondents' levels of agreement that methods used to collect data were accurate and appropriate. This set of analyses was used to determine differences among role groups, school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, high), and audit status (i.e., audit, review). A statistically significant difference was

found between role groups regarding the accuracy and appropriateness of audit and review data collection and processes $F(4, 753) = 5.757, p < .001$. Ad hoc multiple comparisons indicated that RSC and HSE personnel indicated greater faith in the methods used than did teachers (both SBDM and non-SBDM). No statistically significant differences were found as a function of audit status or school level.

Most high school administrators (75% of the eight who responded) indicated that the audit methods and strategies were not accurate. Additionally, nearly two-thirds of non-SBDM teachers, more than half of SBDM teachers, and more than three-fourths of SBDM parents fell into the low opinion of accuracy category. Note that the middle school level tended to form the other end of the spectrum with 40% (of 20) administrators, half of the eight SBDM parents, and two-thirds of HSE and RSC personnel indicating high opinions of accuracy category.

In addition, it appears that perceived accuracy of data collection methods is positively correlated with increased socioeconomic status of students. A bivariate analysis showed that as the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch increases so do concerns about the accuracy of methods $r(84) = .250, p = .022$. However, this correlation accounts for only .056% of the variance and, thus, may not be particularly meaningful. Further investigation of the relationship may be warranted.

Improving Visits in Future Scholastic Audits/Reviews

Four broad categories emerged from responses to the open-ended item, “Describe ways to improve scholastic audit/review visits to schools.” The categories are ranked in order of frequency based on 179 respondents.

Ensure accuracy ($n=129, 72\%$). Respondents suggested that KDE ensure that the audit team selects the most appropriate methodological approach (including number of data collection events and correct data collection instrument and approach), sample of school participants, and duration of visit. In addition, school personnel were concerned about the degree to which audit and review team personnel were knowledgeable about district policies, data verification, and consistency of methods.

- *Methodological concerns.* Respondents expressed concerns about whether the most appropriate strategy was used. Respondents suggested balancing the use of observation and interview data collection approaches rather than relying more heavily on one method. In addition, for sensitive topics such as individual teacher quality, respondents suggested discontinuing group interviews.
- *Sample size and selection.* Respondents wrote that the range of school personnel, parents, and students who participated in the audit or review was limited. Several concerns focused on how they were selected—in some cases random, while in others selection was done by a key stakeholder such as the administrator.

- *Duration of visit.* Respondents suggested that audit and review visits be more extensive to ensure that the team is provided the opportunity to see what “really happens” at the school.
- *Experience of audit/review team.* Respondents’ concerns focused on audit and review teams’ ability to “maintain objectivity,” knowledge of educational processes, consistency in data collection approaches, and ability to verify findings.

Provide feedback (n=24, 13%). Respondents suggested audit and review teams provide feedback during their visits. Many suggested that a meeting be held at the end of the site visit so that the audit and review team can provide feedback and answer questions.

Ensure rapport and respect (n=13, 7%). Respondents suggested that audit and review teams be more positive and friendly during the visit. One respondent wrote, “Let the school know you are not there to condemn them or pick apart everything they do.”

Adhere to ethics (n=11, 6%). A few respondents shared ethical concerns. For some, this was a matter of ensuring the confidentiality of participants. Several respondents reported that personal information had been shared with other school personnel. For others, this was a matter of conflict of interest, since, according to some respondents, members of their audit and review teams worked for the school district or served on committees related to the school.

After the Audit/Review

Familiarity with Recommendations

Read the report. When asked if they had read the report, most audit and review respondents (91.2%) said they had. All administrators but one indicated they read the report, as did most SBDM teachers, Highly Skilled Educators, and Regional Service Center personnel. Among the 8.8% who had not, four groups exceeded 15%:

- Nearly 18% of middle school non-SBDM teachers
- About 26% of high school teachers
- Approximately 17% of SBDM middle school parents
- Close to 17% of SBDM high school parents

When examining middle school and high school responses from only those schools that underwent complete audits, there appears to be a shift in the pattern. Most (94.1%) of the audit middle and high school respondents said they had read the recommendations. Nearly 96% of middle and high school teachers for audit schools reported having read the recommendations, which is much higher than the percentage of all middle and high school audit and review teachers. About a fourth of the SBDM parents reported they had not read the recommendations.

Present at meeting. When asked whether they were present at a meeting when the audit or review recommendations were discussed, most respondents (89.7%) said they were. Of the 10.3% who were not present, three groups exceed 20%:

- One third (33.3%) of SBDM parents
- About 28% of all Highly Skilled Educators and Regional Service Center personnel
- Approximately 15% of administrators, regardless of school level

Of the audit middle and high school level respondents, most were present when the recommendations were discussed (84% of middle school and 94% of high school respondents). This is slightly lower than the percentage of overall respondents who reported being present. Furthermore, nearly half of the SBDM parents of audit middle and high schools were not present.

Understood the report. Statistically significant school-level differences were found in respondents' perceived ability to explain the recommendations to another person $F(2, 769) = 3.269, p = .039$. A subsequent analysis indicated that elementary school personnel felt more prepared to explain recommendations than did respondents in high schools. Furthermore, middle school respondents were more closely aligned with elementary school respondents than with high school respondents.

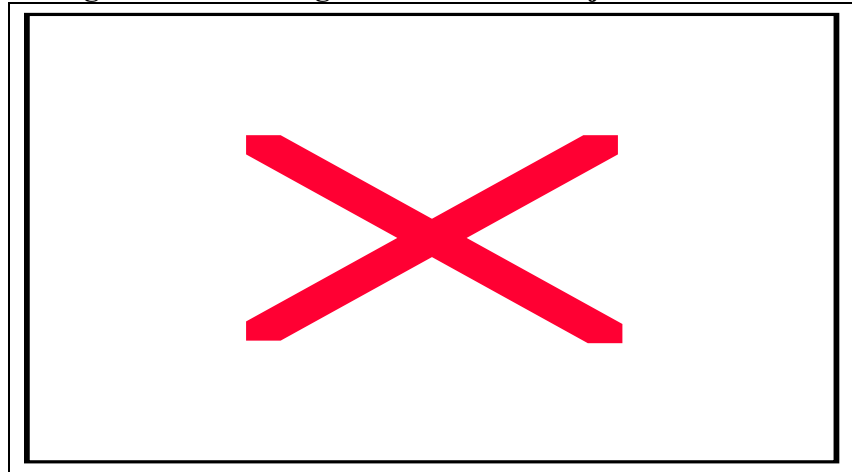
Additionally, analysis revealed a significant relationship between understanding the report and perceived impact of the recommendations on school processes $t(762) = .536, p < .001$. One interpretation of this finding is that as respondents better understand the report, their perception of impact increases.

Another analysis examined these data according to audit or review status. Independent t tests showed a significant relationship between understanding the report and whether the school underwent an audit or a review $t(82) = 2.357, p = .021$. Specifically, respondents from schools that were audited seemed to feel more capable of explaining the recommendations to another person than did respondents representing schools that were reviewed.

Objections from Stakeholders to Recommendations Received

As depicted in Figure 2 below, respondents were almost evenly split in their opinions regarding objections received from stakeholders (i.e., administrators, SBDM parents, SBDM teachers, non-SBDM teachers, HSEs, and RSCs). About 36% of respondents agreed that their school received objections from stakeholders about what was said in the recommendations, while about 37% did not.

Figure 2. Percentage of stakeholder objections received.



Two analyses explored patterns in these data. First, an analysis of variance revealed statistically significant role group differences in objections from stakeholders to the recommendations $F(4, 571) = 6.119, p < .001$. Post hoc multiple comparisons indicated that administrators reported statistically fewer objections than did non-SBDM teachers and SBDM parents. In addition, SBDM parents reported more objections from stakeholders than did Regional Service Center personnel and Highly Skilled Educators.

An analysis of variance revealed statistically significant school-level differences in “Our school received objections from stakeholders to the recommendations” $F(2, 573) = 8.185, p < .001$. Specifically, respondents representing high schools reported the most objections to the recommendations received, followed by elementary schools, and then middle schools. Audit status does not seem to be related to the responses received.

Cluster 4: Accuracy and Appropriateness of the Recommendations

The Accuracy cluster reports respondents’ level of agreement that recommendations provided in the report were accurate and appropriate. An analysis of variance indicated significant school-level differences $F(2, 762) = 13.146, p < .001$. Ad hoc multiple comparisons indicated that respondents representing high schools reported significantly lower levels of agreement that recommendations in the report were accurate than did middle and elementary school respondents.

Cluster 5: Implementation of Recommendations

This cluster addresses respondents’ perceptions of their schools’ reactions to scholastic audit or review recommendations. This set of analyses examines differences in the implementation of recommendations by role group (i.e., administrators, SBDM parent, SBDM teacher, non-SBDM teacher, HSE, RSC) and school level (i.e., elementary, middle, high). An analysis of variance showed significant role group differences in response to and use of audit/review recommendations $F(4, 756) = 5.049, p < .001$. Ad hoc multiple comparisons indicated that administrators expressed more positive opinions about the usefulness and application of recommendations than did

teachers (both SBDM and non-SBDM). There were no significant differences found among school levels.

Another analysis viewed these data by audit status. A t test revealed significant audit status differences in the use of recommendations $t(82) = 2.165$, $p = .033$. Specifically, it appears that schools that underwent a complete audit had a higher opinion of the usefulness and applicability of recommendations than did review schools.

Ways in which Recommendations Were Used

One survey item asked respondents to select one of four statements about how the audit or review recommendations were accepted at their schools. Most respondents (97%) selected statements that recommendations were: (1) “accepted at our school and are being fully implemented” or (2) “were generally accepted and some are being implemented.” More than half (56.3%) of elementary school respondents selected the first statement while more than half of middle and high school respondents (53.6% and 56.8%, respectively) selected the second statement.

Similar percentages of respondents ($M = 2.26$, $SD = .93$) from each school level reported devising strategies other than those in the recommendation report at their schools. Further examination of the groups indicated that 91% of respondents from high schools, 88% from middle schools, and 85% from elementary schools reported using alternative strategies to those recommended.

Cluster 6: Efficacy of the Audit or Review on School Processes

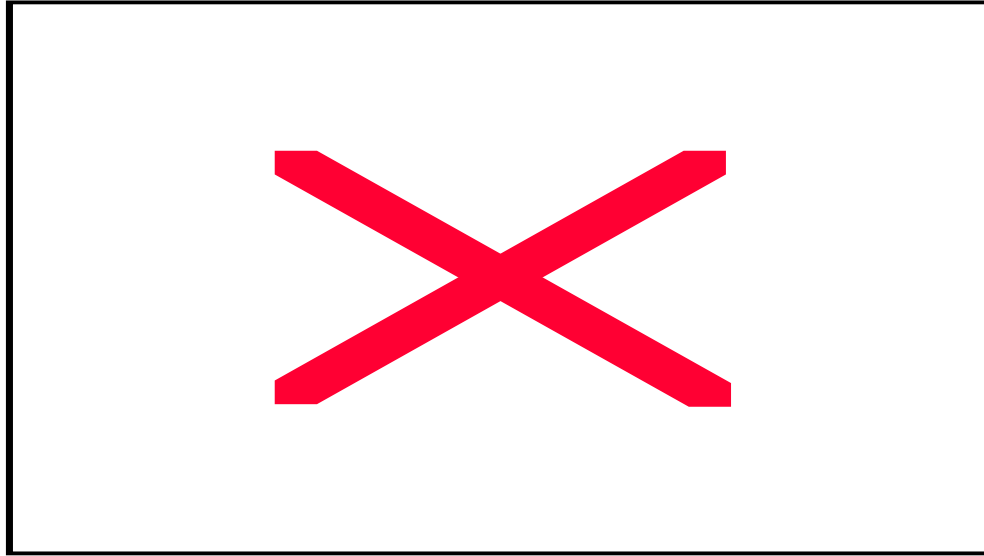
The Efficacy cluster reports on the degree to which the audit or review positively impacted school processes. For these analyses, both the KSA/R Survey and the SI-SI Survey were used. This set of analyses examines differences in perceptions of efficacy by audit status and school level. A t test revealed significant audit status differences in perceptions of the audit or review’s impact on school processes $t(82) = 2.137$, $p = .036$. Schools that were audited perceived a greater impact than did schools that were reviewed. Further analysis revealed significant audit status differences in perceptions of the efficacy of the audit or review leading to major improvements $F(2, 143) = 11.492$, $p < .001$. Schools that underwent reviews saw less impact derived from recommendations than did schools that were neither reviewed nor audited, but that had accessed the SI-SI.

An analysis of variance revealed significant school-level differences in perceptions of the efficacy of the audit or review $F(2, 771) = 5.959$, $p = .003$. Professionals representing elementary schools indicated that the audit or review had a greater impact than did middle school personnel, who, in turn, reported that the process had more impact than did high school personnel. The same school-level pattern appeared to be true for SI-SI-only schools $F(2, 428) = 3.966$, $p = .002$.

Other Ways the Scholastic Audit/Review Led to School Improvements

One open-response item sought other ways that the audits and reviews led to improvements at the school. Most (104) of the 125 responses led to five categories.

Figure 3: Other Ways the Scholastic Audit/Review Led to School Improvements



Policy changes. Respondents noted that the audit or review has prompted school policy changes. Policies have been reviewed, revised, created/written, and implemented, including SBDM policies. Most of the responses were from the elementary and high school levels.

School climate. Respondents noted improvements in the school climate. Some noted that the administration and staff became better at communicating and working together. Others noted progress toward breaking down the obstacles and challenges that students face in the school environment. Though response levels were high for this topic in elementary and high school levels, most came from the middle school level.

Identified weaknesses. Respondents were mainly from the middle school level. The audit or review made the schools more aware of what their weaknesses were and motivated staff to make improvements. Respondents noted that more emphasis has been placed on documentation, core content, and data analysis.

Parent involvement. Respondents noted that parent involvement has increased since the audit or review, and that parents are becoming more involved in field trips, classroom activities, and committees.

Administration changes. Respondents noted that administration changes led to school improvements. Specifically, new administration has allowed teachers to be involved in school planning and funding.

Knowledge and Use of the SI-SI

Analyses focused on familiarity with the SI-SI revealed significant role group differences in perceptions regarding increased familiarity with the SI-SI $F(4, 428) = 10.856, p < .001$. Furthermore, administrators were found to have expressed more positive opinions about the increased familiarity with Standards and Indicators than did teachers, SBDM teachers, and SBDM parents. Ad hoc multiple comparisons indicated that Highly Skilled Educators and Regional Service Center respondents expressed more familiarity with Standards and Indicators than did teachers, SBDM teachers, and SBDM parents.

A second analysis of variance revealed statistically significant school-level differences in increased familiarity with the SI-SI $F(2, 430) = 4.791, p = .009$. Specifically, elementary school respondents reported increases in their knowledge of SI-SI more than did high school respondents.

Examination of respondents' perceptions of the degree to which their schools use SI-SI revealed significant role group differences $F(4, 734) = 2.472, p = .043$. Administrators, Highly Skilled Educators, and Regional Service Center respondents perceived greater use of SI-SI than did SBDM and non-SBDM teachers and SBDM parents. Also, elementary school personnel use of SI-SI increased more than did that of high school respondents $F(2, 736) = 4.019, p = .018$.

It seems that as schools become more familiar with standards and indicators they use them more often or vice versa. An analysis revealed a significant correlation between the school's use of SI-SI and the perceived impact of the audit/review on school processes $r(739) = .602, p < .001$: as use of SI-SI increases, perceived efficacy increases. A follow-up analysis also showed a significant correlation between familiarity with SI-SI and school use of SI-SI $r(739) = .675, p < .001$ and between use of SI-SI before the audit or review and the school's increased use of SI-SI after the audit or review $r(732) = .366, p < .001$.

Improving the SI-SI Document

The SI-SI survey asked for suggestions about how KDE might improve the SI-SI. The responses of 75 people who chose to respond fit into four major categories: (1) Respondents suggested shortening the document ($n=17$; 25%). Suggestions for this ranged from making it into a checklist to omitting repetitive questions; (2) respondents ($n=16$; 23%) suggested that KDE provide feedback with school participants about site visits, observations, and discussions with individual teachers; (3) respondents ($n=16$; 23%) suggested that KDE provide training and assistance, such as ongoing professional development and visits to provide personnel assistance; (4) respondents ($n=13$; 19%) suggested making the recommendation reports more user-friendly, and that it be written in a clearer writing style.

Cluster 7: District Involvement

The District Involvement cluster reports on the degree to which the scholastic audit and review affected district personnel involvement in school matters. Analyses revealed no statistically significant differences among the role groups, school levels, or audit status. The mean score for respondents regardless of school level, group, or audit status was 2.46 (SD = .88).

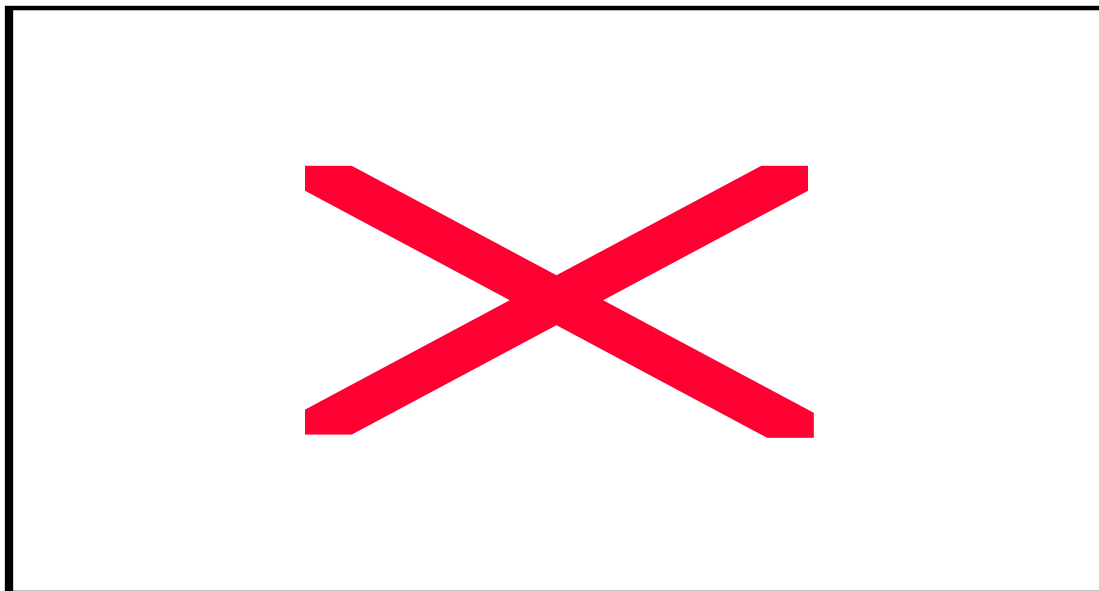
Cluster 8: Professional Development

One set of analyses focused on professional development. The Professional Development cluster addresses the degree to which the audit or review affected professional development opportunities. No statistically significant differences among the groups were found. The mean score for respondents, regardless of school level, role group, or audit status, was 1.11 (SD = .28).

Professional Development Received

Respondents provided 1,290 individual items when asked to list the professional development received. The following table shows the five categories, by school level, that respondents listed as the major types of professional development received following the audit or review. Nearly a quarter of respondents representing elementary schools described mathematics, reading, and other content areas as the major type of professional development received. More than one-fifth of respondents from middle and high school selected curriculum mapping or alignment as the primary professional development activity.

Figure 3. Types of Professional Development Received



Ways KDE Can Improve Follow-up

The following topics were presented by a total of 207 respondents in response to a question asking for ways KDE can improve follow-up. The largest number of responses came from teachers, both SBDM and non-SBDM, though others also responded.

Monitoring (n=129; 62%). Respondents suggested monitoring the districts, schools, and students for progress after the audit or review was completed. There was no notable difference among school levels regarding this topic. Descriptions of the two subcategories follow:

- *Monitor school.* Respondents noted that KDE should work more closely with schools to monitor them thoroughly after the audit recommendations have been received. Specific suggestions included having schools submit quarterly implementation progress reports, sponsoring audit team follow-up visits, and, for respondents representing middle and elementary schools, conducting “mini-audits.”
- *Monitor KDE.* This was generally of more concern to the high school level than elementary or middle. Respondents suggested auditing Central Offices and Board members. In addition, some respondents suggested KDE be monitored for quality by an outside party. Respondents in this category felt that the next audit and review teams need to be well informed about the first audit or review, connected to the SI-SI, aware of work done since the audit or review, and informed of the school’s progress toward the recommended goals.

Stakeholder input (n=23; 11%). This was of more concern to the middle and high schools than the elementary schools. Respondents suggested that faculty and administrative input should be taken into consideration. Respondents noted that input from all teachers, not just a chosen few, should be received. Discussions with all teachers and administrators should be held regarding the specific needs and recommendations to improve the school. More people, including parents, need to be involved in determining the progress of the school.

In-person meeting (n=19; 9%). This topic was more important at the elementary level than the middle or high school levels. Several respondents said that the audit and review team needs to discuss the findings of the audit with the faculty and staff in person. This would give the faculty and staff a chance to ask questions and better understand the recommendations.

Professional development (n=14; 7%). Elementary and high schools were more concerned with professional development than elementary schools. Some respondents noted that more long term, ongoing professional development is needed. It was suggested that uniform training using state standards and varied instructional strategies be given. Half days for professional development were suggested so the training would not interfere with classroom instruction. Respondents also suggested that the professional development be relevant to what is going on in the particular school and to the analysis of student work.

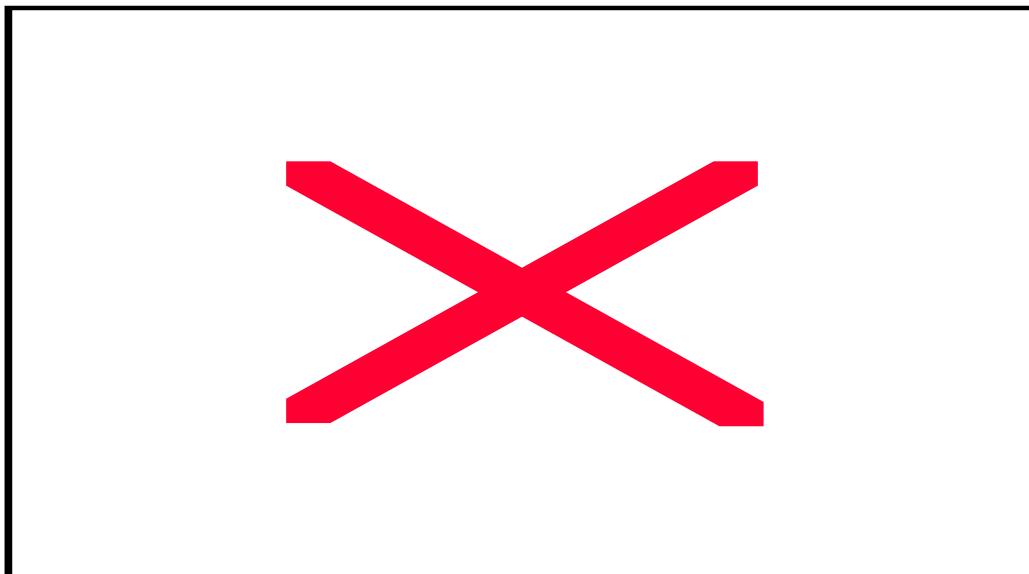
Resource allocation (n=13; 6%). Respondents said that having additional resources available would be beneficial to helping implement the recommendations. Suggestions regarding the types of resources included a list of experts or contact people, realistic suggestions with concrete evidence of what has worked in other schools, copies of the latest materials that have been sent to the district, guidelines that will help teach the children, and outside opinions and observations. There was no notable difference among school levels on this topic.

Continued support (n=9; 4%). This topic was more important to elementary and middle schools than to high schools. Respondents said that guidance and technical assistance need to continue after the audit. They noted that support should continue until the changes have occurred.

Follow-up Activities

Respondents were asked to describe a major follow-up activity that occurred. Categorization led to five major groups of follow-up activities that came from 164 responses. The categories are (1) curriculum alignment efforts, (2) professional development, (3) focus on the Consolidated Plan, (4) meetings to discuss the audit/review and to plan for school improvement, and (5) reviewing of SBDM policies and procedures. As seen in Figure 4, nearly two-thirds (61%) of respondents representing middle schools listed curriculum alignment as the primary follow-up activity. About one-third of respondents from elementary schools reported professional development as a major follow-up activity. About the same percentage from high schools wrote that meetings and discussions were a major activity.

Figure 4. Follow-up Activities



SI-SI Improvements

When asked to describe events that led to improvements in 2000-2002, most of the SI-SI Survey respondents offered one of the following four areas. There were no notable differences among school levels.

Supplemental programs (n=111; 25%). Respondents noted that supplemental programs in reading, math, character education, and remedial programs were instrumental in school improvement. Reading programs were discussed more than other programs.

Identification of strengths and weaknesses (n=104; 24%). Respondents noted that School Improvement Surveys and the Consolidated Plans were instrumental in providing a template for further evaluative measures. Discussed in this category were SACS review and evaluations of teachers, administration, and school.

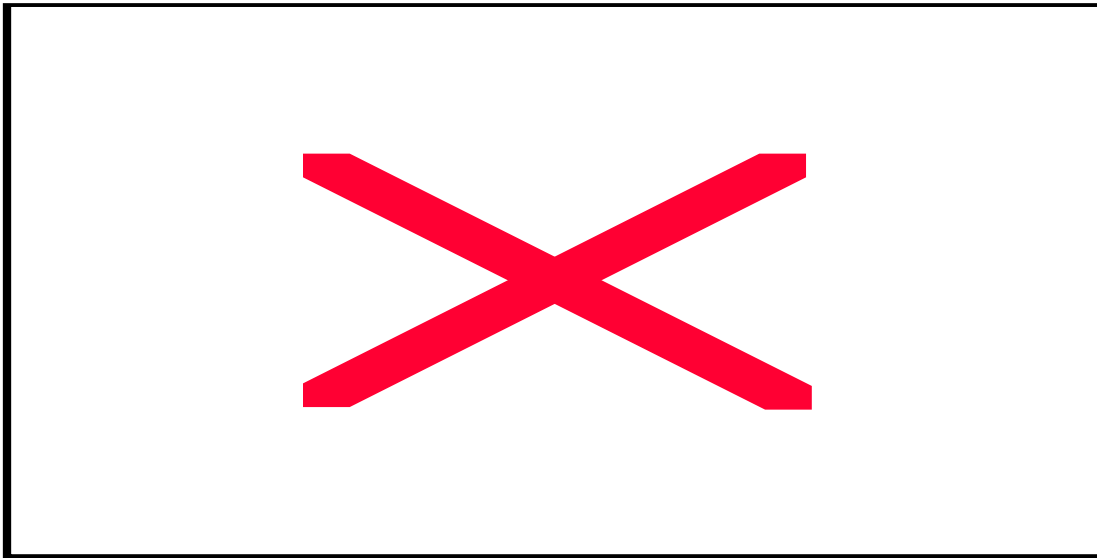
Curriculum alignment (n=76; 17%). Respondents in this category commented that curriculum alignment led to school improvements.

Professional development (n=47; 11%). Respondents noted that professional development in curriculum mapping, consolidated planning, and instructional methods has led to school improvements. The improvements were not clearly described, however. Other types of professional development, such as reading strategies, networking, and technology, were also attended.

Other Events at the School that Led to Improvements

Respondents were asked to list other events at the school in 2000-2002 that led to improvements that did not result from the scholastic audit or review. Figure 5 shows the eight categories for each school level that 221 respondents listed as improvements attributable to factors other than the audit or review.

Figure 5. Other events at the school that led to improvements



As the figure shows, the category offered most often was change in personnel. Nearly one quarter of middle and high school respondents described personnel changes—especially new administrators—as the primary change. The development of committees, including interdepartmental and special activity committees, constituted the second most common response category, followed closely by professional development. Curriculum alignment, the next most common category, was particularly important for respondents at the high school level. Comprehensive School Reform followed and was the category with the greatest frequency of response for personnel at the elementary school level. Switching to operationally focusing on student learning was mentioned fairly often, as were scheduling and teacher reflection at the elementary and middle school levels.

Summary of Findings

Overall

The Kentucky Department of Education may want to consider respondents' reports and suggestions for improving the scholastic audit process. AEL recommends that the KDE pilot and carefully evaluate the impact of any changes before moving to full implementation.

Prior to the audit or review. Respondents reported moderately high expectations of the scholastic audit or review. It appears that most respondents had accessed and used the SI-SI before an audit or review had been conducted. Respondents suggested that KDE shorten the SI-SI, write it in a clear, user-friendly manner, and provide training in its use. To improve preparation for audit visits, respondents suggested that teams provide a clear purpose of the visit, advanced organizers, a schedule of events, and more time between notice that a visit was to take place and the beginning of the visit.

During the audit or review. Respondents shared suggestions for improving the accuracy and appropriateness of the audit or review visit, including ensuring that teams select the most appropriate methods, sample of participants, and duration of visit. Respondents were concerned about the degree to which audit and review teams were familiar with district policies and data collection methods. Respondents suggested teams provide feedback and be friendlier during the visit.

After the audit or review. Most respondents reported they read the recommendations report and were present at meetings where they were discussed. One third indicated their school had received objections from stakeholders about the recommendations. More than half of respondents reported that their school implemented all recommendations, while less than half devised alternative strategies. Major follow-up activities to the audit or review included curriculum alignment efforts, professional development, focus on the Consolidated Plan, planning for school improvement, and review of site-based decision making policies and procedures. New ideas for improving follow-up included monitoring districts and schools for progress, seeking faculty and administrator input, meetings to discuss audit or review team findings from school visits, and providing more ongoing professional development on using state standards and various instructional strategies.

School Level

Findings also indicate a number of differences by school level. Respondents representing high schools reported lower levels of agreement that recommendations in the report were accurate than did respondents from other school levels. In addition, high school respondents reported the most objections to recommendations received, followed by elementary schools, and then middle schools. Elementary school personnel felt more prepared to explain recommendations and indicated that the audit or review had a greater impact than did respondents from middle and high schools. Other reported impacts of the scholastic audit and review process included: high school and elementary school respondents noted that the process prompted policy review, revision, and implementation, while middle school respondents noted improvements in the school climate and schools evaluated their strengths and weaknesses. Use of the SI-SI among elementary school respondents seems to have increased more than it did for high school respondents. It appears that respondents representing elementary schools had greater faith in the audit and review process than did representatives from middle and high schools.

Audit Status

Findings indicate a number of differences by audit status. A higher percentage of respondents from audit schools said they had read the recommendations than did those from review schools. Furthermore, it appears that respondents representing audit schools better understood the recommendations than did those from review schools. Respondents from schools that underwent a complete audit had a higher opinion of the usefulness and applicability of recommendations and greater impact than did review schools. Thus, according to responses, it appears that respondents who represent schools that underwent audits had a higher opinion about the process than did those representing schools that were reviewed. One interpretation is that the stakes were higher for audit respondents

and, as evidenced by the differences in the percentage reading the recommendations report, were more involved with the entire process.

Role Groups

Findings indicate a number of differences by role group. It appears that school administrators, regardless of school level, were most instrumental in the planning and follow-up of the scholastic reviews and audits while RSC personnel played a minor role. HSEs and RSC personnel appeared to have greater faith in the methods used for data collection than did teachers. Most teachers had a low opinion about the accuracy and appropriateness of data collection methods used during visits. Most respondents reported reading the recommendations. However, a fourth of high school teachers reported that they did not read the report. Furthermore, while most respondents reported being present at a meeting when recommendations were discussed one-third of SBDM parents and HSE and RSC respondents, as well as 15% of administrators said they were not. Overall, administrators expressed more positive opinions about the usefulness and application of recommendations than did teachers (both SBDM and non-SBDM). Administrators also reported fewer objections than did non-SBDM teachers and SBDM parents. Administrators, HSEs, and RSC personnel perceived greater use of SI-SI than did teachers. It appears administrators had a higher overall opinion about the audit and review process than did teachers.

Appendix A: Items for each cluster

Appendix A. Items for each cluster

Expectations

6. Our school believed the process would help us
7. Our school knew what to expect
8. Our school felt prepared
9. Our school had received clear information about the visit

SI-SI Before

2. I had reviewed a copy of the SI-SI
3. Our school had often used the SI-SI
4. Our school had already used the SI-SI to evaluate how our school operates
5. The SI-SI has been a useful tool for our school

Accuracy of Methods

11. The methods the team used (e.g., observations, interviews, review of our school's documents) allowed the team to really see what we were doing
12. The scholastic audit/review was conducted fairly
13. During the onsite visit, we learned helpful insights about our school

Accuracy of Recommendations

18. Findings in the report were accurate, in my opinion
19. Recommendations in the report were on target about what was needed for our school to improve

Implementation of Recommendations

29. The recommendation plan is being successfully carried out
30. Expected scholastic audit/review recommendations outcomes are being achieved
31. Plans for use of the recommendations were shared with school staff
32. Our school is monitoring its progress in implementing recommendations

Efficacy

43. Students are making better academic progress since 2000
44. Teachers work together effectively for improving teaching and learning
45. Teachers are committed to making sure every student learns
46. Resources are used effectively to meet student needs
47. Our curriculum is aligned with state content and performance standards
48. School staff understands and uses state standards and academic expectations
49. Educators spend extensive time and energy on improving instructional practices
50. Teachers analyze test data regularly and in detail to improve instruction
51. Teachers analyze student work regularly to improve their instruction

District Involvement

26. District personnel are involved in implementing recommendations
42. The school has received more district leadership and services since the report was made

Professional Development

37. The school/district has provided PD to address the recommendations
38. PD activities have adequately addressed our needs for improvement

Appendix B: Kentucky Scholastic Audit/Review Survey

Included in paper copy.

Appendix C: SI-SI Survey

Included in paper copy.